TEXT OF INTERVIEW MR AZZAM/BBC AFRICAN SERVICE, 16 January 1984

BBC You are the Secretary General of the Islamic Council, that's an organisation of Muslims that covers the world; can you tell me about the recent controversy about whether or not the Islamic Council should be invited to attend the conference in Casablanca?

Mr AZZAM The Islamic Council on 10 December organised an international conference in Islamabad. One of the outcomes of the conference was to release a Model of an Islamic Constitution. This was released and was very well received and the media in Pakistan covered the conference very well. The Final Communique of the conference asked the Islamic Council to send a delegation to the Islamic Summit in Casablanca which started today to present this model to the participants and to contact the media to explain the principles which this model embodies.

BBC Can you tell me as Secretary General of the Islamic Council why you are not in Casablanca today?

Mr AZZAM We wanted very much to go. I contacted the Moroccan Embassy, I had a meeting with the Moroccan Ambassador, I cabled an appeal to King Hassan that the Islamic Council would like to send a delegation to profit from the opportunity of the Islamic Summit to explain what the Model of an Islamic Constitution is, the principles of this constitution, to the media hoping that it would be accepted as an official document at the conference , and to urge upon the governments of the Muslim world to act and to put into practice the principles of the constitution, which is the work of thinkers, jurists, representatives of Muslim organisations over the last 5 years, who have been able to present this document which represents a model of a constitution to be applied in a modern Islamic state.

BBC Why has the Moroccan Government not allowed you to attend the conference?

Mr AZZAM I can't really understand, and the decision of the Moroccan Government is regrettable. I can't see any reason if the Moroccan Government considers there is freedom in Morocco why they are afraid that a delegation from the Islamic Council should go to the conference, contact the media to explain the principles of a Model of an Islamic Constitution. I'm afraid to say that one of the most important chapters of the Model concerns human rights and that is an interrogation mark now, why the Moroccan Governmnet is afraid of talking about human rights in Islam and the respect of human rights according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

BBC The Islamic Summit includes countries around the Arab and Muslim world and apparently your organisation is a non-governmental organisation and you have Observer Status at the Summit meetings, why this time were you not allowed to come? How has it developed that at this point they have decided not to invite you?

Mr AZZAM Since 1975 the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in conference agreed that the Islamic Council of Europe have Observer Status and the right to attend all the meetings organised by the Islamic Secretariat including Summit Meetings or meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs or any other meetings. And since 1976, the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Istanbul, we have attended all these meetings. From 1980 we started to find that the Islamic Secretariat and the Secretary General, Mr Chatty, started to delay our invitations to attend and every time we have to cable them one, two, three or four times before he replies, to give an explanation why there is a delay. And this time he didn't reply at all to our

4 telexes asking for an explanation why the Islamic Council was not invited, in spite of its right according to the decision of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. There was no reply. My interpretation is that there are several governments who are putting pressure on Mr Chatty and unfortunately he is not in a position to say to these governments that the Islamic Council has the right to attend because there is a resolution adopted by more than 40 Ministers of Foreign Affairs to invite the Islamic Council as Observer. The Islamic Secretariat is in my point of view just now a part of a department of a government - say the Saudi Arabian government - and any other government which doesn't like the policy of the Islamic Council , and the statements and the conferences organised by the Islamic Council explaining the violations and attacking the policies of these several Arab countries in violating human rights.

BBC You are saying that the Islamic Secretariat is very much a part of the Saudi Arabians. In your view is the Islamic Secretariat becoming a pawn of Saudi Arabian foreign policy?

Mr AZZAM No, I want to say that the Secretariat in Jeddah under the chairmanship of Mr Chatty is under pressure from the Saudi Arabian Government and other Arab governments who don't like the policy of the Islamic Council.

BBC What in the Islamic Council is so irritating?

Mr AZZAM Because we criticise strongly and in public their policy especially concerning human rights and also their policy concerning their attitude towards the Palestinian question especially during the Sabra and Chatila massacres.

BBC I've heard it said that the problem between the Islamic

Council and the Islamic Secretariat began at the time of the Iran/Iraq war as the Islamic Council took a firm stand critical to Iraq's attack on Iran. Do you think that the Islamic Council is being isolated from one part of the Arab world because of its position or do you believe that the human rights issue is more important?

Mr AZZAM The Islamic Council since the war started tried its best to contact the officials and to call upon them for a cessation of the war. Unfortunately, as with other organisations, personalities and governments, we failed and we couldn't do more than calling upon them to cease hostilities. But from the beginning we said the aggressor should pay for his aggression and it was very clear that in the point of view of the Islamic Council the aggressor was Iraq and many Arab countries were not very happy at the stand of the Islamic Council. But I think the most important is our criticism concerning the violation of human rights, in Syria, in other Arab countries, and the policy also of wasting the wealth of the Muslim Ummah by the Saudi Government.

BBC Would you say that the Islamic Council is impartial and does not have any ties to any government - for example people will say if you are critical of Iraq you must be a supporter of the Iranian regime, or the Libyan regime. Do you take a position on that?

Mr AZZAM We have no contact whatsoever with Iran. And I can say that we have news about the deportation of Afghanis from Iran. Now the Council is trying to find the reason for that and if there is no really solid, legitimate reason the Council will condemn strongly the attitude of the Iranian Government. We have nothing to do with any government whatsoever. We are a non-governmental organisation and all Muslims who are members of this organisation are doing their best to have a policy independent of any government.